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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 002124

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAO](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: REPORTED UNIFIED SLATE FOR DAWA AND KARBALA TRIBAL
GATHERING

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Don Cooke for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) Summary: On July 1 in Karbala, a delegation of tribal sheiks from Salah ad Din Province and tribal sheiks from Karbala signed an agreement in support of security, reconciliation, national unity, democracy, reconstruction, and private investment. Also on July 1, tribal sheiks from Karbala, s most influential tribal gathering and the provincial Dawa leadership agreed to form a unified slate for the 2008 provincial elections. The platform for the unified slate is strikingly similar to the unity agreement announced by the tribal delegation. The unified slate reportedly has the personal support of Prime Minister Maliki. In PRT view, the events in Karbala suggest a possible broader regional trend of cooperation in upcoming provincial elections not only among tribes, but also between tribes and parties that take a relatively non-sectarian stance. End Summary.

TRIBAL DELEGATIONS MEET IN KARBALA

12. (SBU) From June 30 to July 1, 2008, a tribal delegation from Salah ad Din Province met with Karbala tribes in Imam Awn area of Karbala Province, approximately 10 km north of the Karbala city center. The Salah ad Din tribal representatives are reported to have included sheiks from Samarra, Ad-Dour, Balad, Al-Is-haqi, and Al-Hatamiyah. The Salah ad Din delegation was received in Imam Awn by Karbala Sheiks Abdul-Mehdi Al-Karbalae'e and Ahmed Al-Safi. The following day, the delegation was visited by Karbala IP representative Rahman Mishwi and the secretary general of Al-Hussein shrine, Sheik Abdul-Mehdi Al-Karbalae'e. (Comment: It is notable that the politically powerful Karbala ISF Commander, MG Ra,ad Shaker, did not himself address the delegation. End Comment.) The delegation was also greeted via telephone by the Salah ad Din Provincial Governor, Hamad Humoud Al-Shakti.

THE CHARTER OF NATIONAL COMMITMENT

13. (SBU) The final session of the tribal engagement included the participants, signing of "The Charter of the National Commitment" which reportedly provides that the tribes will:

- i. Promote dialogue for the resolution of disputes and renounce violence;
- ii. Promote the unity of Iraq's land and people;
- iii. Refrain from inflammatory speeches that promote civil strife;
- iv. Make the tribes a resource for the promotion of national unity, sovereignty, independence and prosperity;
- v. Educate the people to support democracy as a forum for dispute resolution and political rivalries;
- vi. Support the national government in its efforts to secure the provinces;
- vii. Support efforts to accelerate reconstruction and investment.

14. (SBU) According to locally translated media reports of the

event, Sheik Sa'a Al-Haddad Al-Husseini of Balad said "The document was signed today at a historic moment coinciding with the Iraqi special anniversary of the Al-Ishreen Revolution," the tribal revolution of 1920 against British rule. Sheik Mish'an Shihab Al-Jawari, the president of tribal sheiks council of Al-Douloiyah said, "The Karbala initiative came from the hearts of the real Iraqis and their originality which came from the originality of Imam Hussein and his brother Al-Abbas." Sheik Abbas Al-Wan Al-Hir, the Senior Sheik of Khafaja tribes in Karbala said, "this charter is a practical program to fight the sects and terrorism."

THE NATIONAL GATHERING OF TRIBES OF IRAQ IN KARBALA

15. (S) On July 3, 2008, PRT Offs met with Mohammed Sadiq Al-Hir (strictly protect source), a prominent local businessman and 'independent' candidate for the Karbala Provincial Council. Mohammed has met a number of times with the PRT and is known to be a secularist who is critical of the religious parties and favors continued U.S. presence in Iraq. (He is also the only businessman appointed by the Prime Minister as a member of the six-member National Committee of Religious Tourism and he traveled to Iran with that Committee this past spring.) In previous engagements, Mohammed informed the PRT that he would be running in the provincial elections on the slate of the National Gathering of Tribes of Iraq in Karbala (the "Gathering"). The Gathering is reported by Mohammed to included about 400 active members and includes over 200 tribes. PRT is aware of two less influential tribal groups in Karbala that are reported to be fielding slates for the provincial elections.

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UNIFIED ELECTION SLATE FOR DAWA AND KARBALA TRIBES

16. (S) During the July 3 meeting, Mohammed informed PRT Offs that from about June 15 to June 30, Dawa Party officials and senior leaders of the Gathering engaged in successful negotiations for the development of a unified slate for Dawa and the Gathering in Karbala. These negotiations are reported to have been initiated by Dawa leadership in Karbala. (Dawa leadership in Karbala includes: Mohammed Khadum Al-Hir, Governor Aqeel Al-Khazali, PC member Amaladeen Majid Al-Hir, Mohamed Magus, and Jawad Al Roosa) The senior representative of the Gathering is Abas Alwan Al-Hir. During the course of those negotiations, the group was reportedly contacted by senior Dawa officials at the national level. Mohammed asserted that Prime Minister Maliki encouraged these negotiations. He reports that on July 1st the Gathering and Dawa signed an agreement to form a unified slate of candidates for the provincial elections. That agreement reportedly includes a platform supporting women,s rights, education, infrastructure development, Iraqi unity, federalism, the rule of law, support for foreign and local investment in Iraq, and multiparty rule. The agreement was signed July 1st by the senior Dawa members in Karbala and by Sheik Abas Alwan Al-Hir for the Gathering.

THE NEW & IMPROVED DAWA

17. (S) PRT Offs reminded Mohammed of his frequent past criticism of the many Dawa party officials in Karbala, including the Provincial Governor, Aqeel. Mohammed replied that Dawa has moderated and is not the same party it once was. He cites struggles between Dawa and ISCI as evidence of the new Dawa. He further argued that the changes in Dawa coupled with successes in recent national security operations in Basra and Nasiriyah have made Prime Minister Maliki a very popular figure in Iraq. Mohammed believes there are mutual benefits to the unified slate, provided it is an open list election. He added that the unification agreement is contingent upon the adoption of the "open list" as a part of

the provincial election law. When pressed to specify the benefits to the Gathering, he emphasizes his perception of the popular power of Dawa. For his part, Governor Aqeel has not been a big fan of the tribes or the Sons of Iraq program.

His willingness to develop a unified slate with the Gathering constitutes a significant change in approach.

NOT EVERYONE AGREES IN THE POWER OF DAWA

18. (S) On July 1, 2008, PRT Offs met with Ala,a Hmoud El-qutub Al-Tomah, the Secretary General of the Islamic Action Organization in Iraq, a former member of the Iraqi legislature. He reports that his organization was formerly part of the Organization of the Islamic Labor, led by Ayatollah Mohammed Taqi Al-Modarisi, but they split over undisclosed differences; al-Moderisi,s party is now led by Ibrahim al Muteri. Ala,a Hmoud, who dresses in religious garb, describes his party,s platform as the belief in one God, loyalty to the people of Iraq, education, democracy, diplomacy, one Iraq, and support for good relations with the U.S. He stated that his party will not run under the Dawa umbrella. Ala,a Hmoud,s party currently does not have any members elected to any provincial or national offices. Muteri,s party includes Karbala councilman Abdul Hasan Ali Ibrahim al Farad Al-Furati. Ala,a Hmoud predicts many surprises for the provincial elections. He sees the people favoring candidates with financial backing and argued that Abdul Aziz al-Hakim,s ISCI party is the most powerful due to its Iranian ties. He feels that Dawa is weakened by multiple factions caused by Iranian influence. PRT contacts with other popular independent candidates reveal confidence in their positions stoked primarily by the supposed unpopularity of the major religious parties.

19. (S) Comment: PRT Offs believe that the independent candidates have substantial public appeal but most report that they are concerned that foreign influences (Iran) will present a substantial obstacle for their success; Mohammed himself reported to PRT Offs in a prior engagement that he had been offered financial backing from Ba,athists in Syria and he would be accepting that support. The independents with tribal backing are generally pro-democracy, favor U.S. presence in Iraq, support private investment, national unity, and peaceful resolution of conflict. Key to the popularity of the tribes is the fact that they are generally non-sectarian, with most tribes having both Shia and Sunni members. We believe voters, who are increasingly disillusioned with religious parties and sectarian violence, will find this appealing. If Dawa is successful in open list

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provincial elections it is likely that these independents-turned-Dawa will become the new face of Dawa in Karbala province and, given the prominence of Karbala, the new popular image of Dawa in Iraq. The temporal proximity of the Dawa-Gathering agreement and the conference of tribes from Karbala and Salah ad Din suggests a possible orchestrated effort on the national level by Dawa officials to gather the increasingly influential tribal sheiks under the Dawa banner. End Comment.

CROCKER